

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00

NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20 USIA-15

SAM-01 ISO-00 ACDA-19 AID-20 CEA-02 COME-00 EB-11

FRB-02 CIEP-02 STR-08 TRSE-00 LAB-06 SIL-01 OMB-01

DRC-01 /177 W

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R 211948Z FEB 74

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8137

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, UK

SUBJECT: GENERAL ELECTION: FOREIGN POLICY

1. SUMMARY: EXCEPT FOR EC MEMBERSHIP, FOREIGN POLICY
IS NOT AN ISSUE IN THIS ELECTION. END SUMMARY

2. DESPITE HAROLD WILSON'S DECLARED DETERMINATION TO
KEEP BRITISH MEMBERSHIP OF THE EC FRONT AND CENTER IN
THIS CAMPAIGN, AND DESPITE THE PROFOUND CONSEQUENCES
FOR BRITISH MEMBERSHIP THAT A LABOR VICTORY COULD HAVE,
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THE ISSUE AS SUCH HAS NOT CAUGHT FIRE. AMONG THOSE

VOTERS WHO PERSIST IN BELIEVING (INCORRECTLY) THAT HIGHER FOOD PRICES ARE DUE TO THE EC, THE ISSUE WORKS marginally in LABOR'S FAVOR, BUT ONLY AS PART OF THE MUCH LARGER ISSUE OF INFLATION.

3. ENOCH POWELL IS SCHEDULED TO BREAK HIS SELF-IMPOSED SILENCE IN THIS CAMPAIGN WHEN HE ADDRESSES TWO RALLIES SPONSORED BY AN ANTI-MARKET ORGANIZATION THIS COMING WEEKEND. IF HE GOES SO FAR AS TO URGE CONSERVATIVES TO VOTE LABOR BECAUSE OF WHAT HE CONSIDERS THE OVER-RIDING IMPORTANCE OF GETTING BRITAIN OUT OF THE EC, THEN THE ISSUE COULD STILL ASSUME MAJOR SIGNIFICANCE, BUT AS OF NOW IT APPEARS UNLIKELY THAT THE OUTCOME OF THE ELECTION WILL BE DECISIVELY AFFECTED BY POPULAR ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE EC.

4. THIS ONE ISSUE ASIDE, THERE ARE NO OTHER ASPECTS OF FOREIGN POLICY THAT PROVOKE EVEN MINIMAL DEBATE. ALL THREE MAJOR PARTIES HAVE REAFFIRMED THEIR SUPPORT FOR NATO. LABOR HAS PROMISED TO SEEK THE REMOVAL OF AMERICAN POLARIS BASES FROM GREAT BRITAIN, BUT WHEN PRESSED FOR CLARIFICATION, RESPONSIBLE LABOR SPOKESMEN MAKE CLEAR THEY WOULD PURSUE THIS GOAL ONLY IN THE CONTEXT OF MULTILATERAL DISARMAMENT NEGOTIATIONS AND ONLY IN RETURN FOR MATCHING MOVES BY THE USSR.

5. LABOR HAS ALSO PROMISED TO REDUCE DEFENSE SPENDING, BUT AGAIN WHEN PRESSED, RESPONSIBLE SPOKESMEN INDICATE THAT NOTHING LIKE THE MAGNITUDE OF CUTS ADVOCATED BY LABOR LEFTWINGERS (ONE BILLION POUNDS) IS CONTEMPLATED. SHADOW CHANCELLOR DENIS HEALEY, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE TODAY, SAID HE ENVISAGED CUTS OF "SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS."

6. COMMENT: OUR OWN ESTIMATE, GIVEN THE COUNTRY'S STRAITENED ECONOMIC SITUATION, IS THAT THE NEXT BRITISH GOVERNMENT, REGARDLESS OF ITS POLITICAL COLORATION, WILL PROBABLY FIND ITSELF FORCED TO CUT ITS DEFENSE BUDGET.

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